

India - Mexico Relations

India and Mexico have striking similarities in geo-climatic conditions, biodiversity, physiognomy and people, cultural and family values, as well as European connections of the colonial era. Both are heirs to a great civilizational heritage and contacts between them indicatively go back centuries. Legend has it that an Indian princess 'Meera' landed in Mexico in the 17th century and is well-known here as 'La China Poblana.' Mexico was the first Latin America country to recognize India after Independence and establish diplomatic relations with India in 1950. Mexican wheat varieties used in Indo-Mexican hybrids were the backbone of India's Green Revolution in the sixties.

2. Among common Mexicans, there is wide general awareness, high interest and regard for Indian culture, social values and her pluralistic democracy. India's achievements in the economic, educational, scientific & technological fields, especially in recent years, are greatly admired. Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Tagore, and Mother Teresa are widely admired. Gandhiji's statues and busts adorn four major Mexican cities: roads and several schools are also named after him. The writings of Nobel-laureate and Indophile Octavio Paz, who was Mexican Ambassador to India in the sixties, on his long experiences in India have had a profound impact in Mexico.

Political

3. The bilateral relationship has long been characterized by warmth, friendship and commonality of views on a wide range of issues. Even though there are differences on expansion of the permanent membership of the UNSC, environment, climate and non-proliferation issues. As such, there are no disputes in the relationship. In the cold war years, Mexico and India had worked together closely as members of the UN, G-77, G-15 and G-6 (nuclear disarmament), both actively championing the interests of developing countries such as in the Uruguay Round of Trade Negotiations.

4. Till mid-eighties, the two countries exchanged as many as eight visits at the level of Head of State and Government. Bilateral interaction regained momentum, particularly with the exchange of high-level visits of former President Felipe Calderon in September 2007, when the two countries established a "Privileged Partnership", and President Pratibha Patil in April 2008. PM Manmohan Singh attended the G-20 Summit in Los Cabos, Mexico in June 2012. Our Ministers of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Agriculture, Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation, the Speaker of Lok Sabha & MOSs for Commerce & Industry, Parliamentary Affairs, Textiles and Water Resources have visited Mexico in recent years. An Indian Goodwill Delegation of Parliamentarians visited Mexico in October 2014. MOS(I/C) for Petroleum & Natural Gas visited Mexico in May 2015 with a large delegation of CEOs of PSUs and leading private sector companies.

5. Rashtrapatiji has extended an invitation to President Peña Nieto to visit India. Mexico has also extended an invitation to our PM to visit Mexico and is keen on both visits taking place in the period 2016-2017. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a meeting with President Peña Nieto on the sideline of G-20 meeting at Brisbane in November 2014 and again on the sidelines of UNGA at New York in September 2015.

6. Meetings under established bilateral mechanisms such as the 6th bilateral Joint Commission and the 3rd Foreign Office Consultation were held in October 2014 and March 2014 respectively. The JCM meeting was convened for the first time at Minister level for which Mexican FM Jose Antonio Meade travelled to New Delhi.

Economic and Commercial

7. Bilateral trade has grown rapidly in recent years. At US\$ 6.45 bn in 2014, it is still well below its potential and may well reach US\$ 10 bn by 2018. India's exports (US\$ 3.73 bn) mainly comprised vehicles and auto parts, organic chemicals, electrical machinery & electronic equipment, aluminium products, readymade garments, iron and steel products and gems & jewellery. Our imports (US\$ 2.72 bn) mainly consisted of crude oil, electrical goods and machinery, organic chemicals, vehicles and auto parts and iron & steel. India is the third largest buyer of Mexico's crude oil, which had turned trade balance in favour of Mexico during 2012 & 2013. Steep fall in crude oil prices in 2014 again brought the trade balance in favour of India amounting to US\$ 1.01 bn.

8. Investments from India in Mexico are estimated significantly into several hundred million US dollars. Most of the leading Indian companies in IT/software, pharmaceutical and automotive companies have invested in facilities and plants in Mexico taking advantage of its strategic location, large market and investment friendly policies. OVL has opened an office in Mexico with the objective to participate in the bidding process of exploration & development of oil and gas fields in Mexico. Mexican companies have also begun to invest in India in the automotive, chemicals and entertainment sectors.

Functional Cooperation

9. The two countries have several bilateral agreements & MOUs, including for investment promotion and protection, double taxation avoidance, extradition, administrative assistance in customs matters, air services, S & T co-operation, Space cooperation, Promotion of traditional medicine, Tourism Promotion, Cultural Exchanges, etc. India gives 15 scholarships to Mexico under the ITEC program and another four under the academic exchange program offered by ICCR. The Gurudev Tagore Indian Cultural Centre has been functioning in Mexico since October 2010, teaching Yoga, classical and Bollywood dances, sitar, tabla and Hindi and Sanskrit. Tourism between the two countries is steadily increasing. Around 15,000 Mexicans visited India last year & they have been extended the online e-Tourist Visa facility. Over 30,000 Indian tourists visit Mexico annually, including from the USA & the European countries.

Indian Community

10. The Indian community (PIOs/NRIs) in Mexico is small & estimated to be around 2500, comprising mostly software engineers of Indian IT companies - TCS, Infosys, Wipro, Accenture etc. In addition, there are several executives in the Indian and international companies, academics/professors in the local universities and some private businessmen in textile and garment business. Out of these categories, only the academics and businessmen are permanent residents of Mexico. The rest are on short term work assignments of 2-3 years and get replaced after that. Of late, Mexico has emerged as a route taken by illegal migrants from Central American countries, India and others, to go to the US.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India to Mexico & Belize website:

<http://www.indembassy.org/index.php>

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